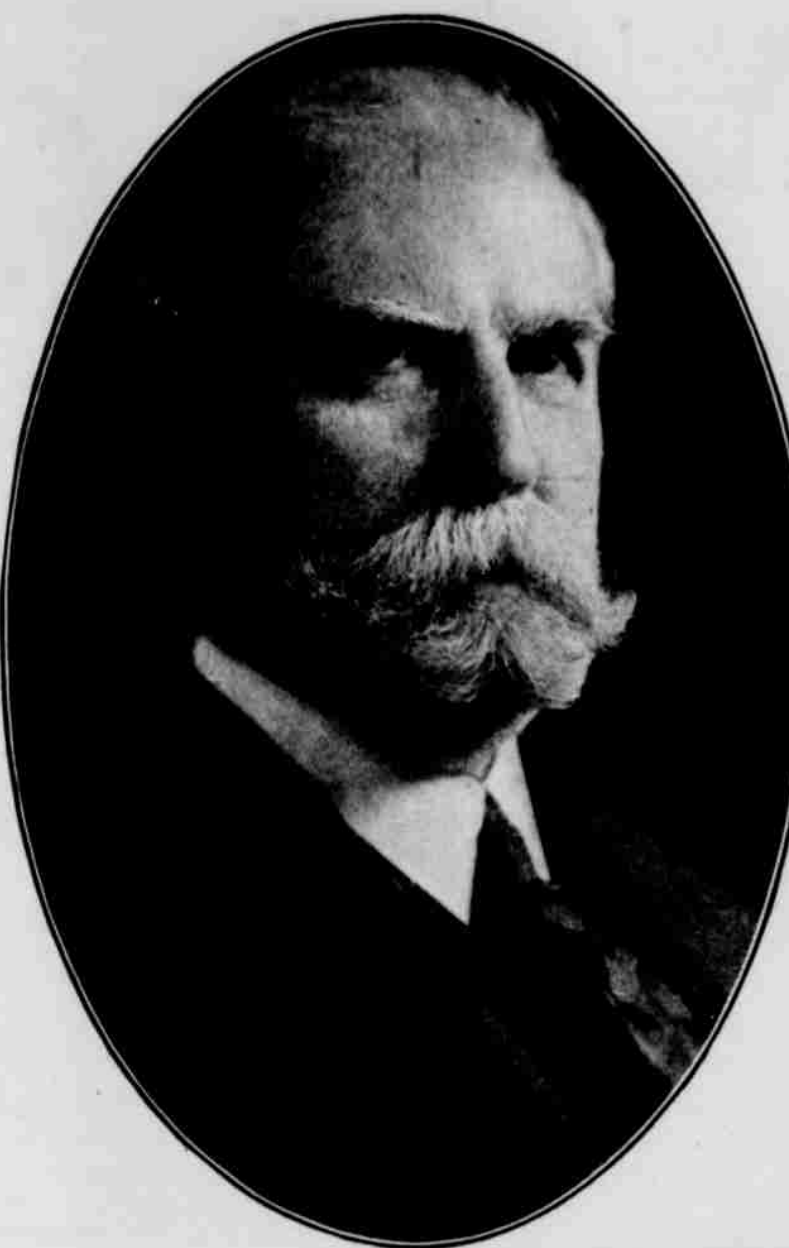


Charles Evans Hughes, American Premier

By WILLIAM ATHERTON DU PUY



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CHARLES EVANS HUGHES,

Who occupies the post of Secretary of State in President Harding's Cabinet.

CHARLES EVANS HUGHES comes to the position of Secretary of State under a Republican Administration, which quite naturally seeks to deprive the opposing party of as much credit as possible by doing whatever it may to dim the star of Woodrow Wilson. Mr. Hughes, believing in a broad way in the fundamentals in which Woodrow Wilson believes, deeply convinced that the great need of the world is an organization among nations, is today seeking with his best energy and great ability to bring about that organization. At the same time he is seeking, as a great lawyer, to represent his client, the Republican party, and to accomplish this end in such a way as to get for that client every credit for accomplishment that is possible.

And this man Hughes, working on this difficult task—what manner of man do you conceive him to be? I have seen him many times in Washington, and, with your permission, I will depict him exactly as he appears to me.

His Beard a Barometer

I FIRST saw him at the State Department about the time of that little brush with Panama and Costa Rica, in which he performed the first official act which indicated the manner of Secretary of State he was to be. The State Department, these days, is a very important assignment to the newspapermen who are located in Washington. Secretary Hughes came to the first conference with newspapermen, which I attended, beaming genially. I had known him 15 years earlier when he ran for governor of New York, at which time he was an angular, thin man who had won for himself the reputation of being a human icicle. This man Hughes seemed to be an entirely different person.

In the first place, he was different physically. The beard of the Hughes I had known a decade and a half ago was full and somewhat inclined to be scraggly. That of the Hughes of today is very short-cropped except on the chin, where it is parted sharply to right and left, providing a most distinctly marked path down the Secretary's chin. It is a very carefully barbered and tended beard. Later on it became a barometer to the reporters of the State Department, indicating the international situation. When each hair was immaculately in place, the sea of international affairs was taken to be running smoothly. When problems of diplomacy tended to become involved, the Secretary's whiskers were likely to stray from the position of formality and become somewhat confused and entangled across this path. It even came to pass that there were occasions when each individual, reddish-brown hair was seen to stand on end and bristle. This indicated that some near affront had been offered to an American policy.

To digress, while on the subject of the Hughes whiskers, it may be said that they have been part and parcel of this public servant through all the years of his active career. He was but a youngster of 19, just graduated from Brown, when he presented himself at Delaware University and asked for Professor James O. Griffin, now of Leland Stanford University, for a position teaching Greek. That dignified preceptor patronizingly reminded the applicant that he had no more hair on his face than an egg. Whereupon, young Hughes declared that if whiskers were a necessity to

pedagogy, he would promptly grow a crop. He was accepted on condition that he do so. He then turned them out to grow and has never shaved since.

The Hughes who appears before the newspapermen every morning and afternoon is 30 pounds heavier than the Hughes of a decade and a half ago. He is, in fact, a man of strapping physique, five feet ten and weighing 180 pounds. His flesh is well distributed and he gives the impression of rugged physical strength. He is attired in a dark business suit, somewhat worn and infrequently pressed.

But the thing which surprised me most about Hughes when I first saw him, was the geniality of him. I never knew a man who smiled easier displaying a formidable array of large white teeth. He talks very frankly to his interviewers, tells them everything that diplomatic situations do not require that he should hold in confidence.

One day I asked to see Mr. Hughes, to sit down and visit for half an hour, that I might the better understand what manner of man he was. I found that he wore his genial smile in the inner office, also. He reached out a sturdy hand which seemed to lend itself to hearty shaking. I looked about the room appraisingly and then said to this Secretary of State:

"Where, Mr. Hughes, are the icicles?"

Origin of the Icicle Myth

AT THIS sally he laughed genially and said he would let me into a secret. This icicle myth, he said, was one which had followed him through all his official life. There had been no important step in his busy life, however, in which a great discovery had not been made. It was always found that, despite his reputation, Hughes was not icy, but genial; he did not frown, but smiled; he did not repel, but attracted. A great fuss was always made over this discovery. It was widely heralded through the public press and was rarely contradicted. Then years would pass and he would be thrust into some other public position, whereupon, the same startling discovery would be made and proclaimed in the same way.

I afterward attempted to discover the origin of this theory that Hughes was a human icicle. I am quite convinced that it had its inception at the time when he first came into public life. Fred C. Stevens was sent to New York by the legislature in Albany to investigate the gas companies. The key man in such an investigation was the attorney whom the committee employed. The newspapermen of New York waited eagerly to find out who would be the legal representative of this body. Finally, it was announced that one Charles Evans Hughes, a man entirely unknown, would fill that position.

Reporters descended upon this attorney in a swarm. He refused to see them. For four days they cooled their heels in his antechamber, but never a peep did they get. The reason for this was that Charles E. Hughes had but four days to prepare for the investigation that was to follow, and during each of those four days he was working 20 hours. He had no time for interviewers. On the fact that he would not see them, the reporters built the icicle myth which still prevails.

Mr. Hughes said to me that thus early in the day of his incumbency in the State Department his freedom of speech was somewhat interfered with by the fact that his head was so full of matters that he might not discuss, but he browsed back into the past and talked freely on this and that. He agreed with me, for example, that there was always interest in the antecedents of any individual who was being studied. Folks like to know if he is French or Dutch or Scotch in his line of descent. Of himself he might say that the original Hughes was a Welshman and that his minister father had married a girl named Connolly of Scotch-Irish descent. There was once a little girl, Mr. Hughes said, who was asked where she was born. "Nowhere," she replied, "Daddy is a preacher." This, said Mr. Hughes, might describe his case very well, but his parents were temporarily sojourning in Glenn Falls, New York, when, in 1862, he came into the world. But his father, being itinerant, moved on and Oswego, Newark and Brooklyn may be set down as having furnished the background for his youthful days.

He Wanted to Be a Teacher

THE parents of Charlie Hughes intended him for the ministry. His natural bent was toward teaching, and it was only after having experimented much in this latter profession and after having failed to find in it the leisure for study which he sought, that he gave it up for the bar.

Mr. Hughes showed me a very large old-fashioned gold watch, one of the sort that our fathers used to wear, one which fills quite snugly a vest pocket and which is bound to one's buttonhole by a heavy gold chain with links like a log chain. The Hughes timepiece with its attachments is true to the tradition of the generation that is past. The Secretary of State showed me this watch, opened the back of it and revealed an inscription which indicated that it was given to him by a law class he had taught at Columbia 34 years ago.

He liked teaching, Mr. Hughes told me, and had the idea in his mind that it was to be his life work. After he had practiced law for ten years, he gave it up and accepted a professorship at Cornell for two years. But he did not find the leisure for study he had ex-

pected and went back to the law. It was still another ten years before his opportunity came.

I found Mr. Hughes a more matter of fact man than I had expected him to be. He tackles a given job; he concentrates on it; he applies a very great capacity for work to it. He is an investigator, a compiler of and digester of great quantities of information on any subject. It was on his capacity to bring out the facts, first about gas and afterward about insurance in New York, that his reputation was built. No man has ever done better pieces of investigation. He applied to these assignments his philosophy of mastering the job.

In public office the public is his client. He has never swerved one iota from the cause that meant the best interest of his client. Probably the best example in his career of putting aside private profit for public interest was his action toward the Pulitzer bequest. Joseph Pulitzer, the publisher, when he died, willed Mr. Hughes \$100,000. Mr. Hughes, though a poor man, refused it. Accepting it might deprive him of some freedom of action.

So, over there in the State Department, we find this man Hughes investigating, mastering the job, acting in the public interest. Mr. Harding is giving him much latitude and the fogs of misunderstandings are being dispelled.

The new Secretary of State, for instance, went carefully into all the issues when Panama and Costa Rica were near war over a boundary dispute. Then he issued a statement. It said that both nations had bound themselves to abide by an award handed down by Chief Justice White, of our Supreme Court, and that this award should stand. He made it so crystal clear that justice lay in that award that neither of these small nations could fly in the face of his opinion. The situation was cleared up.

His Definition of Mandatories

IT WAS a month or two later that Secretary Hughes issued a statement on mandatories. The United States had been one of the nations associated in the war, he said, and had acquired certain rights as such. The fact that she had not signed the Treaty of Peace did not relinquish those rights. She still had her say in the distribution of mandatories. This was so obviously a fact that nobody anywhere has since taken issue with it. The surprise was that the situation had not been understood before. It was but a little job of understanding to be mastered. Hughes had mastered it.

Then there appeared the question of disarmament. It has harassed the world for generations. Through those generations most nations have been ardently in favor of disarmament. There has been but the occasional nation, nursing some dream of power, that has stood out against it.

The League of Nations furnished an agency which might discuss disarmament, but we were outside the League. The nations within the League could not proceed to disarm with the United States left free to multiply her bayonets. Obviously there was but one way—for the United States to initiate a program in which all might join. This nation called a conference, which may be epoch-making.

The Hughes mind is not hurried. It masters the question before it acts. The Harding Administration has confidence in its premier. So have most members of the opposite party, for that matter.

The Hughes method may be as strange a thing in diplomacy as the marksmanship of American troops was in the war. Soldiers had never before picked individual targets and hit them. But this new thing got results. So may it be with Hughes diplomacy. Diplomatic problems have never been stripped bare, laid on the slab, dissected, and the findings frankly shown.

It is the Hughes way and Hughes is just now taking the big plunge into world affairs.



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CHARLES E. HUGHES,

As he appears on the streets of Washington.